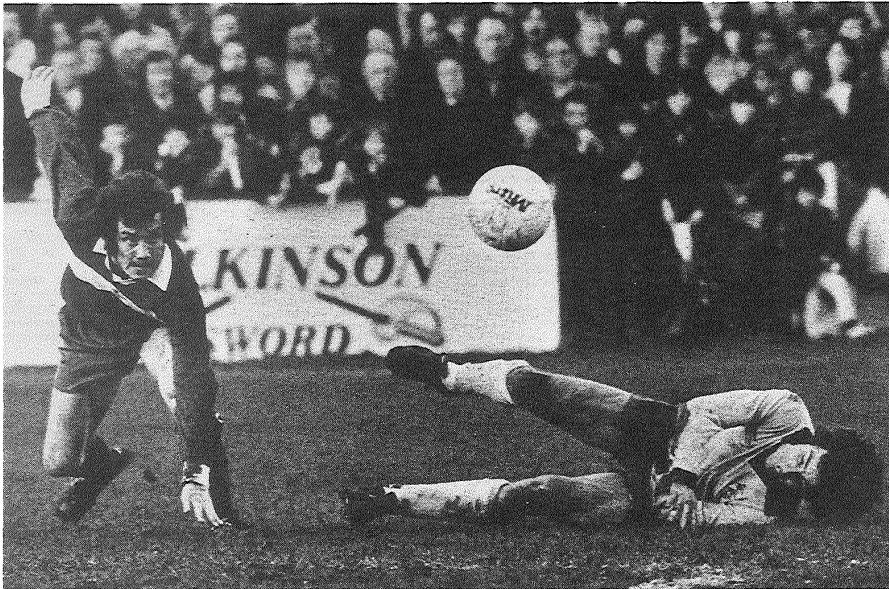




Sports Post on the spot in Cup-crazy Bucks

Magnificent Wycombe put Boro on the rack



■ Willie Maddren, Wycombe midfield player, gets in a header, after beating a Middlesbrough player



■ Boro's keeper Maskell gets down to gather a cross, with Foggon (left) and Mead (centre) watching.

WHAT an unbelievable match. Little Wycombe Wanderers from the Rothman's Isthmian League held joint First Division leaders Middlesbrough to a goal-less draw in a fantastic FA Cup third-round tie at Loakes Park.

It was incredible because Wycombe came so close to winning. They pounded away at the Middlesbrough goal in the second half and Hollisfield and Phillips came within inches of snatching a sensational victory.

So much for Wycombe manager Brian Lee's prediction that his side had no chance.

Middlesbrough showed right from the start that they were prepared to take no chances whatsoever.

Three times in the opening five minutes goalkeeper Platt fielded back passes from his colleagues.

Jack Charlton's men seemed undaunted by the prospect of playing the non-League side on their own sloping pitch.

Teams: Wycombe, Maskell, Bissell, Haig, Mead, Phillips, Reardon, Perrin, Kennedy, Scare, Hollifield, Horseman. Sub: Evans.

Middlesbrough: Platt, Crags, Spraggan, Souness, Roam, Maddren, Brine, Hickton, Mills, Foggon, Armstrong, Sub: Willey.

The Wycombe defence made a quick impression on the match, giving nothing away at the back.

The Middlesbrough back men too were dominant.

Neither side was able to

WYCOMBE 0 MIDDLESBROUGH 0

By David Wright

create a clear-cut chance in the opening 15 minutes. A half chance did fall to Foggon but he mis-cued and Maskell had no difficulty in saving.

This miss of Foggon's proved to be the nearest that Middlesbrough were to come to scoring all afternoon.

Midfield

After 17 minutes Wycombe won their first corner when Platt fisted clear. Then Platt had another anxious moment when Kennedy fired in a tremendous shot which was not far off the target.

The Wycombe play was confined to midfield, where Scottish international Souness stood out for Boro' with some fine cultured football and he was clearly the mastermind in the visitors' side.

Perrin had the Wycombe fans roaring when he burst through and hit the foot of the post, but referee Porter had already blown for off-side.

Wanderers' captain Mead was doing a magnificent job in marshalling his men as well as keeping a close watch on Boro's danger man Hickton.

As half-time approached signs of frustration were creeping into Boro's play and they conceded a couple of free kicks outside the area. But Wycombe were unable to take advantage of them.

Wycombe received a tremendous cheer as they went off at half-time, but how richly they had deserved it.

Wanderers had comfortably held the north-east side in the first half and, apart from that miss by Foggon, Boro had never really threatened the home goal.

Wycombe opened the second half on the attack and Kennedy drove in a low shot which hit the post.

A minute later they nearly scored. Horseman centred low from the left and Perrin, racing in, just touched the ball wide of the near post.

Middlesbrough retaliated by forcing a corner, their fourth of the match, but this again proved fruitless.

Easy, Easy

The Wycombe fans were beginning to sense the shock result as Wanderers began to get on top.

They taunted the First Division men with chants of "easy, easy" and "what a load of rubbish".

It wasn't quite that, but Wycombe were indeed looking the better side.

Birdseye, with a fast overlapping run down the right, created havoc in the visitors' defence before Crags came to his side's rescue by conceding a corner. Wycombe continued to have more of the play and their keeper Maskell was virtually a spectator.

No wonder Jack Charlton was looking glum. He must have been astonished by this display from the home side.

And he must have had his heart in his mouth when Phillips headed inches past the post from Reardon's free kick.

Ten minutes from time Boro' sent on Willey for Foggon and the substitute fluffed a half-chance just before the end. But all the glory was undoubtedly Wycombe's on a day which the Bucks club will never forget.